

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MAY 2003

General Summary. May temperatures averaged 58.0° or 2.2° below normal while precipitation averaged 4.68 inches or 0.45 inches above normal. This ranks as the 37th coolest and 44th wettest May among 131 years of state records.

Temperatures. Considerable cloudiness early in the month kept temperature fluctuations to a minimum. The first widespread occurrence of 80° weather did not arrive until the 27th with just a very few scattered locations reaching 80° earlier in the month. A few central Iowa locations reached the low 90's on the 30th with Des Moines and Williamsburg recording 92°. Lake Park and Primghar failed to reach 80° during May. Overnight low temperatures were frequently dipping into the 30's during May but only once made it as low as freezing. Cresco and Williamsburg reported the month's lowest temperatures with 31° readings on the morning of the 21st.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 4% greater than normal but 20% less than last May. Heating requirements for the entire heating season (since July 1, 2002) are running at normal and 14% greater than last season.

Precipitation. The wet weather pattern that began in mid April continued through the first one-half of May. Rainfall was widespread on the 4th, 8th, 10th, 13th and 14th. The frequent rainfall caused spring planting activities to fall behind the normal pace after what had been a quick start of planting in April. However, the second half of May was much drier and planting progress was essentially back to normal by month's end. A statewide average of only 0.55 inches of rain fell during the second half of the month. Overall this was Iowa's wettest month since August and ended a string of 6 consecutive drier than normal months.

Severe Weather. The early month rains were frequently accompanied by severe weather. Severe weather was reported on the 4th, 5th, 8th, 10th and 14th with 15 to 25 counties affected in each event. Large hail was the main severe weather ingredient with hail as large as softballs reported from Mahaska County on the 8th. The second half of May was much quieter with large hail reported from 9 counties on the night of the 28th.

Spring Summary. Spring temperatures averaged 47.6° or 0.6° less than normal while precipitation totaled 9.17 inches or 0.60 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 63rd coolest and 56th wettest spring among 131 years of state records.

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